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Contact: Lori Latham
PH: (616) 401-1743 (mobile)
EM: lori.latham@kentcountymi.gov

Medicare Telephone Scam Alert

Public warned about scammers posing as Medicare representatives; calls fraudulently appear to come from Kent County Health Department phone number

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Feb. 13, 2019) – The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) is warning people across the country about a new Medicare telephone scam.

Medicare recipients have reportedly received calls appearing to originate from the KCHD's main number (616-632-7100). The callers fraudulently identify themselves as Medicare representatives offering a free knee or back brace. The caller then asks the person to share some personal information, such as a Social Security number, to "confirm" his or her identity.

The KCHD urges anyone who receives such a call to hang up immediately.

"We *do not* call residents and ask for Social Security numbers or any other sensitive personal or financial information," said KCHD Director Adam London. "It is disheartening these scammers are using the KCHD's phone number and impersonating Medicare representatives to target older residents."

The KCHD urges residents to be alert to any phone and e-mail scam using the KCHD's phone number. Additionally, residents should follow these tips to avoid scams:

- **Hang up.** If someone calls asking for personal, health, credit card or other financial information or if they ask for money, hang up. If you think the caller may be telling the truth, hang up and call a number you know is genuine. In this case, call Medicare at 800-633-4227.
- **Do not provide any financial payment.** Scammers often threaten to take action against you if you do not immediately pay or provide personal information. Government agencies *will not* threaten you for upfront payments and likely will contact you via mail.
- **Slow down and do your research.** Scammers prey on fear and want you to act quickly. Before you disclose any personal health information or issue payment, verify the business by researching it online, search for customer reviews, etc.
- **If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.** If someone calls or e-mails to offer you something free or at a discounted price, it is likely a scam.

The KCHD has notified proper authorities and has posted a warning about the scam on its website. Additionally, all KCHD staff have been notified about this situation and have been given instructions on how to respond to callers.

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